

FRAGMENTED MELODIES



KANGSEN FEKA WAKAI

VISIT...

LANZAROTE
Caliente.COM

Fragmented Melodies

Kangsen Feka Wakai



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Dedication

Creative will: the most potent alchemist

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Itangi's Song

(For Mammie)

Fleeting cherub, sacraments for your bosom, cushioned manger.
Caramelized mangoes, perfume, kola-nuts,
Petals of morning glory and *Beaufort*
for your altar. Inhaling the disarming fragrance
of consecrated incense sticks, men are powerless before such spells.
Ekwang: greasy sacrament infused with blessings and crayfish—
No constipation, divine treat.
Love: your vine, inebriating.
Your heart: battlefield of conflicting wills, bridge to antiquity—Arcadian
puzzle.
You: mother, imperfect mortal, yet, more pristine
Than a Puritan's praise hymn.

Femme Noire

(For Mammie and others like Her)

If I could write a perfect poem,
I would write one for you.
I would paint portraits with metaphors
And draw your lips in charcoal
Reading sensual rhymes drenched in emotion,
And suffocating with truth
If only I could stop scratching my head...
Biting my fingernails...
And shredding piece after piece of paper
Then maybe I could write a perfect poem for you
The kind of poem you'll read at the park
Make me wish we could dance
As you whistle to our songs
From Sade to Coltrane
Reminiscing of those good old days.

Blind Tango

I am wrapped in the delicate arms of your passion,
Drawn by the irresistibility of your aura,
Your whisper echoes
I have no need for the radio.
I attempt to call your name
But I find myself saying:
Come to me...
Come to me...
Come to me with all the woman in you
So I can make sounds that aren't words...
Sounds that alter the rhythm in music
Come to me...
Come to me so I can groan and let go
As you dazzle and bewitch me
Charm and provoke me
With that glance that makes me shudder
Tame me with your thighs
And unleash that beast that hides underneath my skin
Make a man of me and be the woman you can be
So we can slip into a dark but pleasurable abyss
Where reason takes a back seat.

Joy on the wings of autumn

When she's away,
I straddle on the fringes of despair.
Hollow eyes like a famished ghost
I sob like a whimpering infant
As I write sonnets.
Sentiments of regret...
I am lost in the chasm
Separating thought from word
And desire from action.
When she's here,
I assume my boyish posture
And cling to irrationalities.
Oh, deceptive ego—die ego die!
Die so I can love her.

Subliminal Echo

I never underrated her voice

Engaging...

Forceful and alive

Enticed my will to savor bland evenings

Eager to postpone goodbyes

Frowns become smiles

Goodbye!

I feel so deprived...

Slaving Tonic

What is a poem?
Against the backdrop
Of an enchanting smile
A few words
Compared to the magic
Of your sensitive touch
Sculpted with the creator's masterful brush
What is a beautiful song?
To a yearning heart
Bruised but eager
To learn about love
A heart pained by
The sheer blindness of love

Witches Brew

She...

Tender butterscotch lips

Scorching...

Body heat

Paradise—a kiss away.

Phantasmal Sister

After conception

We shared the same nipple

She...

The cunning child of an impotent father

The fruit of an adulterous liaison

Between desire and touch

She was lodged in the heart of tyranny

Hidden inconspicuously beneath the sparkle of misty eyes

Bound in a cluster of desires

She played chess in the mind of an unrepentant slave master

She introduced herself as love: a metaphor of God

A daughter's attempt to reach a distant father...

A son's hug to a reluctant mother...

It was hatred that tightened the knot in her stomach... made his heart
beat faster

Love bound this family together

Made the drummer drum louder

Love is...

Friendship revived!

Enmity denied!

Love is divine—

For all is divine

Ask the divine

For you are divine

Gliding stealthily like a serpent

Love is light shining upon the terminally blind

Love is the sweetness in palm wine

The warmth of two feet rubbing against each other

Love is the fear of denouncing ones mother
The wrath of a disappointed father...

Love is a shabbily dressed orphan; the tickle in laughter; the blessing in agony; selfishness in charity...love is the taste of honey.

Painless; fearless; peerless; timeless; love is blindness

Priceless...

Having something to be said; wanting to be heard; sewing with no thread; sharing a loaf of bread; love is the melody in a bird's chirp; the impulse to rebel when subjected to fear; dancing on the gate of hell; unpredictable; frightening; shallow; tempting; arousing; painful; daring and stupid.

Love is the sum total of sentiments locked in a single teardrop. Love is a kiss to her forehead; love is an approving cheer; a denouncing jeer; love is his daughter's name on his hairy chest; a test; a game of chess; seeking redress; an impassioned address;

IGNORE THE PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

SEEK REDRESS

Love is...

Love is revived with a hug

Love is embedded in the layers of a harmonious bass line

A million chants in a soundproof dome

A bittersweet potion with no recipe

Love is a goalless task

And a humorless god's last curse

The Ghost Still Lingers

(For Papa)

I have known morally sedated ghosts who wear red berets
Standing expressionless like guard dogs
Ready to execute orders from the boss
Papa!
Papa!
Your name is engraved on prison walls
Bequeathing tales of a righteous cause
Your conscientious shield cannot withstand bullets
But your story will inspire those who dare to be brave.

Inside The Fence

(For Papa)

The little window stares piercingly
Making mocking faces and lewd gestures
Clanging steel doors push me to the fringes of despair
I erased a vice called fear
Sustained by the conviction that brought me here

My soles dread the coldness of the floor
And the floor despises the lifelessness of my feet.
As I sit in one corner, head between legs
I hear protest songs being sung from afar
—Another reason to confront this tormenting fear

My father, Rtd. Justice Nyo' Wakai was brutalized and later incarcerated with 172 others at the Brigade Mixte Mobiliere (B.M.M) after the flawed presidential elections of October 1992. He was later transferred to the Kondengui Maximum Security Prison in Yaounde. I was fourteen years old.

A Symphony In Reticence

The feverish chorus
Of a million accents
Hide beneath this smog of quietude,
Clamoring, screeching and wailing;
Craving for an elusive justice
Stifled by debonair tyrants in a den of insatiable vermin.
Immaculate flag of peace,
Smeared with the blood of innocents.
Olive trees secrete hemlock for sap.
Freedom calls jostle against unjust laws.
Bare boulevards in unmarked plots
Await the erection of luminous monuments
—Homage to worthy beings; tribute to a collective quest;
A testament to the tenacity of spirit.

Bantu Voices

This is the voice given to me by me
To transmit through verse,
My triumphs and pain
Using soulful melodies through songs
Like *Soweto* miners singing the blues from dusk till dawn—
Humming away cruelty with smoke-stained vocal chords
They sing in their sleep
Because the diamond mine can be a difficult place to breathe
On dark Friday nights
Bantu voices infuse the downtrodden with the beauty of blackness

This is the voice of Malcolm,
Transcending the walls of Harlem
Cleansing every shame-filled pore
Unearthing the forgotten rhythms of the delta
Rednecks dream of a date with Ella
This is the voice that screams *Africanity*
Forcing itself from a manmade obscurity
In fact Malcolm gave voice to voiceless southern sharecroppers
And cleansed the heart of many a back alley hustler

This is the voice that screams:
Chaos!
Rapture!
Anarchy!
Defiance!
Revolution!

Nonconformity!

Africa!

Eden!

Nineteen sixty-eight!

A motel balcony in Tennessee!

The voice of a dying King soothes our battered hopes with utopian
dreams

Inherited Bondage

Our souls are held captive by Nordic myths
We search for a flat nosed deity whose origin eludes the grasp of memory
A deity that outdates the oldest mummy

Our flawed spirituality keeps us contented in mediocrity
The imagination can never be exhausted
Roman scriptures sever the chord linking us to our ancestors

I ignore the authority of alien effigies
Concepts about trinities make no sense to me
The height of the hill shouldn't discourage our ascent to its peak
My mother gives strength to her rosary beads
She puts melody in Sunday hymns
The spirit is not confined to any creed

I hold the key to my deliverance
I mock the integrity of celibate priests
The month of December ceased to exist
My goal is to attain eternal bliss

I'll talk with a female elephant
She can bring me close to the deity that preceded the first pyramid
The deity that understands the language I speak...
The deity that dictates my lucid dreams

Our souls have been convicted spiritually
Robbed of the crafted archetypes we revered,
We wonder why our plight never ends
We eagerly defile the gods of our dead
As a consequence our tears can't nourish this earth

Mosquito hallelujahs in a city of dissident mystics

Black spirits...

Nameless heroes...

Your cries sip quietly through

This mound of earth, my body—a hollow tomb

Concealing the bare bones of departed prophets

Restless spirits—

A disembodied pantheon of cherubs

Agonizing souls...

Restless spirits...

Unanimated and speechless saints of the *Grassfields*

A heinous crime is being perpetrated

We are being morphed into a colony of insatiable carnivores

Toothless dogs in a flesh-gnawing outpost

Blind mice in a mad scientist's ill-equipped lab

Refuge, we seek in the cusp of dusk

Night: the blank stare of a drunken deity

Sunlight: timeless fuel of existence

Passion: a formless beast, the aftermath of a quiet volcano

The ambiguous muse of this eternal consciousness

Our sorrows hide in fierce dances, drumbeats,

And the most harmonious of melodies

Black spirits...

Nameless heroes...

Untold stories...

Warning!

AK47: woman

African Woman Power!

Our armor against the bloodthirsty bullets
Of mythmakers and reality crafters
The bastards children of antiquated conquerors
Coarse haired descendants of General Leclerc's bloodline
Here we are,
At the mercy of these insidious specimens
Mother
Goddess
Please spice this soup of life
With chili peppers and alchemical broth
Let the fires of justice burn with Idenau's unpaid crude
Saro-Wiwa did not die in vain
You brought forth the reality I know
Mischievous of a Goddess
Zeus: your toy
Eros: you are
Yemojah: your shadow
Jesus! You worship
You call on him 205x
Psalm 27
*When the wicked came against
Me to eat my flesh,
My enemies and foes,
They stumbled and fell.
Though an army should encamp against me,
My heart shall not fear,
Though war should rise against me,
In this I will be confident.*
Mother: Buddha lives in you

Mother: Jehovah lives in you
Mother: cosmic serpent of yore

Medusa: prodigal daughter of your *play* step-sister
She says politics is sinister!
Hers is the voice of Yahweh
And her singing led us to an underwater city
Where we found peace in the arms of excommunicated heretics,
Forgotten exiles, and prisoners of conscience

To trigger nightmares,
We disappeared in the abysmal jungles of Conrad and Livingston
They put us to sleep
Then the demented bells of dissident mystics began to clang
We woke up
And drank pepper soup in the grassy fields of Achebe's words
That was yesterday
The written word is the arrow of a pompous god
Black spirits...
Nameless heroes...
Vengeful ghosts...
Combustion of resurrections: Nyobe, Moumie, Kimathi, Sankara,
Samora, Garang, Biko, Nkrumah, Lumumba, Cabral...
Nameless heroes...
Black dreams...trampled hopes...
Traitors...black traitors
Lost in a white cloud of smoke
Rolled in a ball of cotton
Drunk like a cup of Ethiopian tea
Spat out like Mobutu

Time: eternal enemy of thieving tyrants
Heed the words of a poet,
An obscure poet...uncelebrated hero with a pen...
Hair strand in a rich man's bowl of lobster soup
Night: a vault of ghastly secrets
Life: a bountiful tale with no apparent beginning or end
Black spirits...
Nameless heroes...

Unleashing Nyamfuka

Scouring a path
Out of this labyrinth
Of answers and questions,
I began conceptualizing and crafting
Ideas and models to make sense
Of what wasn't meant to make sense.

A realization:

I am that I am not!
Not the mango eating,
Palm-wine drinking,
Dancer to the toxic notes
Of an untrained drummer—
Your music gives me diarrhea.

Another realization:

I am that I am not!
Not the salvation seeking
Post-modernist deconstructing
Symbol of a curious scholar's creation
Not a specimen for meticulous observation
I am a researcher's nightmare; reason's enigma;
A philosopher's migraine

Rude awakening:

I am what I am not!
Lodged in a crystal ball
Of a *western* magi's spell
I have weaved dreams
Into quilts brimming with proverbs
Self-diagnosis: my thoughts are my bondage

I am music to sleepless ancestors

A Neolithic boy's dream,

I am another undecipherable petroglyph.

I have dreamt of world's to come.

My essence: words cannot grasp

And the eyes dare not see.

My story: one protagonist, me.

Mrs. Regina Tita's Death Celebration

In those days
I fell asleep on her
Instead of listening to
The prophetic throbs of her heartbeat
Like music
I should have whistled to her breathing
Instead I began sleeping....
And dreaming of her stealing scenes
From the script of my reality
I mistook screams for whispers
Nightmares for dreams
Streams became rivers
But these days...
Apathy is synonymous with being asleep
Words are abstract
Words distract
A freedom fighter becomes a terrorist
A heroine is branded a fugitive
Heal the sick with Assata Shakur's bounty!
Murderers acquitted!
Prophets convicted!
These days....
Pioneers become primitive
Settlers impose themselves on natives
But as long as the masquerade keeps dancing
Kwifuai will keep on asking
Mediums will keep on answering
Writers will keep on writing

Painters will keep on painting
Drummers will keep on drumming
Singers will keep on singing
Fighters will keep on fighting
Kwifuai will keep on asking
And the gods will bring a forth a day of reckoning
An age of pondering
Revealing the purpose in poetry
Decoding the symbols in stories
Stories woven from a multitude of fabrics
Murals paint themselves on my walls
She kisses me as I snore
And even in that place where time losses relevance
I hear her heartbeat guiding me
As I follow the invisible footprints
Of my departed ancestors

6:15 A.M.

I shrink away from daylight like a wilting leaf—
Clinging to sleep, dreaming of not waking up,
Then realizing my wishes are as futile as the world I wake up to face.
A rush of red-hot rage runs through my veins,
Fantasies of me disappearing, like I never existed tease my brain—
Yet, I plunge head first into a world I hate—
As strings of cowardice hold me back from using my blade.

Little Black Boy

I am the manifestation of the fiery conflict
Between colonial thought and my essence.
I come from the dark alleys of history,
Amidst the mangroves where reptiles roam
In fair company with destitution
I flirt with a lingering hope
Sometimes I dream of rusted shackles
Calling my name from the seas
And craving for my limbs.
I am a little black boy
And my fate dangles on invisible strings
That stretch across the oceans.
I am that little black boy you saw on T.V,
Sucking on my mother's withered breasts
As insistent flies try to seize their own share.
Yes, that little black boy who learns to play the sax,
Takes the train up north and soothes even the sleepless with jazz.
A little black boy...
Your nightmare, my nightmare
Yes, I am the boy who stands with bloodshot eyes staring at nothingness
As my little brothers and sisters cry
Their moans drowned by a torrent of bullets
A long rifle by my side
I could care less if I live or die.
I am the little black boy
Left by those who dove into raging oceanic waves
Seeking freedom in the jaws of death
Cursing bondage loudly as they took their last breath.

I am that little black boy

Who knows no peace, seeks no peace

And chuckles at the sight of anarchy

The buffoon!

An idiot!

A minstrel!

Wide eyed, face twisted like an old camel,

My neck bent to the left, I hop and make you laugh,

You are entertained by my silly pranks

I am the little black boy who pushes your dope

Infested my own community with ‘crack’

Endangered species number one!

The same one that fights your wars

Leaving trails of blood—

The same one who plays ball

So resilient, even after I fall.

I am that little black boy in the crowds

My tiny black fists clenched

No comprehension of events

Yet as the crowd begins to chant

An unknown spirit makes me yell

Freedom! Freedom! Absolute freedom!

Morning Time in Kigali

My backyard is a slaughterhouse
Neighbors blindfold themselves with French-bred hate
And unleash an inherited barrage of rage on each other
A man slit the throat of his best friend's daughter
Limbless children in Freetown frown
And a gun-totting kid in Liberia laughs as a generation drowns
Gunshots and screams animate nighttime
I can't go to sleep
I can't move
I stare at the lifeless ceiling
I hear loud whispers
A procession of bleeding women with gashes and wounds heads my way
Blood from their foreheads splashes on the floor
I wish I hadn't forgotten how to pray
They are chanting my name
And their voices sound frail

The children of Rwanda are calling my name
The children of Rwanda are calling my name
I can hear them loud and clear
But I pretend to be deaf...
The children of Rwanda are calling my name
As machetes strike innocent heads
I shut my eyes
I try hard not to cry
I am living a scripted lie
The French implanted this hate!
They encouraged the rapes!

The spirits of boys and girls
And the ghosts of men and women haunt the insensitive namesake
And keep me awake

When the thirst of blood invades like locusts
The sign leading to Rwanda reads holocausts
Drop the guns!
You are fulfilling western fantasies!
Tear Charles De Gaulle's legacy!
He carries the curse of every African witch
Scavengers despise the stench of his corpse
And the cross on his tomb will either rot or burn!

The children of Rwanda are calling my name
The children of Rwanda are calling my name
We are namesakes who went astray
And tragedy has held us in a final embrace

Scions of the dispossessed: ghetto dwellers

(Caracas to Bamenda)

You have inherited the cancerous vestiges of colonialism. Conquered. You are weak and feeble, yet surprisingly strong and brave. You are insecure of your abilities and humanity. You remain subjects of an imperial dominion sustained by the sticky sweat of your brow. You've been condemned to an eternity of irrelevance—an inaudible drum to a deaf audience.

Conquistadors have used your blood to demarcate their vast holdings. You envy them but the invisible scales of divine justice will not weigh in their favor. You are vulnerable—a voiceless indigene in a noisy cosmos.

Age is no friend to the fighter! You've survived the worst of hungers. The desert keeps pushing its borders.

North Korea goes Nuclear. Scions of man-hunters seethe in anger. Hypocrisy is the most cynical of veils.

You have no place to call your own. You sit on a treasure trove of gold, yet you carry with you a begging bowl. Your reality is gone; a relic in her majesty's eerie basement, a collector's artifact.

Paradise is just a gunshot away. Your eyes still bear the scars of antiquated gore. You are traumatized. Break your back so white-boy can get paid. Your friendship with Europe has driven you insane. Call on NGUMBA whenever you kneel down to pray! Abakwa boy dem say:

'Monkey di work, baboon di chop!'

Okra Soup and palm-wine at Mrs. Mary Ngwa's chicken parlor on Ghana Street

I have danced
Many a time
On the rocky precipice overlooking
The rift valley of death
To fear hell—
A Houston jail cell with steel bars
Lucifer, an underpaid warden debilitated by stress

I have partaken
In many a dirge
And shed many a tear
For a prophet disguised as a friend
Transitions through death
I feel your presence
Your story will be told

I have bellowed
Many a laughter
To the astonishment
Of pious angels sitting on heaven's gates
Guarding mythical thrones with bows
But no arrows
Note to self:
Dragons and gods are metaphors
For human nature
Angels have no sense of humor

I have eaten okra soup
From the same calabash
With the voiceless dwellers
Of humankind's slums
Drank palm-wine from the same gourds
And prayed to their gods

We have slept on the same bamboo beds
And defied mosquito bites on moonless nights
Every night they bite
Every night we fight
They bite
We fight
And fight...and fight

Hollywood vs. Africa

Hollywood!

You struck the first blow

That started this fight

An ill-fated squabble

With no end in sight

We understand...

Your motivations are trite

And you view the world

Through child-like eyes

Reality eludes you

Who put this interminable curse on you?

A putrid existence

Floating on a slimy lake of dreams

Yours is a depraved stepchild's fantasy

Hollywood: trendsetter and chronicler of

Euro-centrism

You are like the empty-headed girl

With big breasts who attracts yet repulses me

How could you stop listening to your own heartbeat?

Coked-up white boys crafting their versions of history

Black thespians redefining minstrelsy

Hollywood

Sodom wouldn't even envy you

You are the seed of conquistadors and pilgrims

The fruit of bloodletting hypocrites

A vestige of the California gold rush

A harlot of sorts

Don't you realize that the grounds on which you stand will sink
someday?

Seismic waves do not discriminate

Kwifuai is watching you

The gods have really gone crazy!

Bushmen and witchdoctors have cast a spell on you

Anorexic goddesses will reign over you

Stiff-necked commandoes will govern you

Hollywood

Yours is a void of loneliness

Misery in opulence

Coke and rum for happiness

Profiteer of human tragedy and sadness

The gods have really gone crazy!

Lights!

Camera!

Action!

We await Hotel Darfur!

Blues for the Wretched: reclaiming a Rock n Roll past

(For Bono, Sir Geldoff and others)

It seems as if we no longer sing the blues
Because this asphalt paradise of ours
Blinds us from the steel illusions
Of an otherwise bluesy post-modern reality
But black boys in ghettos around the globe
Still inspire hope
Suicide hangs on a rope
And the dreams of a bare footed messiah
Are conveyed through acoustic guitar strings
Hendrix is a testimony of attempts
Africans worldwide
Have made to reclaim their rock n roll past
Infusing rhythm into the scattered notes
That accompanies the selfish angst of privileged white boys
Writing blues songs in the comfort of Victorian mansions
Your bland lyrics sung with passion
Will not feed a hungry Somali boy
In fact we stopped singing the blues
When we acquired the taste of French wine
And discarded our colorful garbs for the strain of a tie
Trained accomplices in tyranny
Making refugees of ourselves
Today, we find solace from dusty records that place us on the frontlines
of independent movements
Walking hand in hand with the unheralded martyrs of African liberation
Though it seems as if we no longer sing the blues
In moments of solitude

We recall the melodies of songs sung
In the humidity and stench of colonial labor camps
And that is the blues
Our blues
Caught in the firm grasp of memory.

A plea for the living

(For Bobe Wole Soyinka)

Our faith in providence
Has not delivered us
From this existential playground;
Where egoistic ends
Turn minions into heroes,
And specters of the netherworld
Assume fetish form.

Hidden in a cobwebbed
Closet of superstition,
The heart grieves
But tear ducts deny the passage of tears.

A lake of emotions
Is formed.
Poisoning the essence
Of those still to be born.

The stars are frowning on us.
The moon retreats
And loses its glow.
Time: a splinter in the mind's quest for the unknown,
A numbing void initiates its quest.

Beneath the sea bed and hill crest,
Truth lingers everywhere,
Playing psychedelic melodies on its bamboo flute,

Inebriated from yesterday's palm wine,
Providence mocks our innocence,
And teases our emptiness.

Artisan of the cosmos;
Infinite imagination
Trickster extraordinaire
A plea for the living!
Guide us to a fountain of nothingness
Where serenity sips ceaselessly
Like nectar from overripe mangoes.

Silence is pregnant with an eternity of words...

Pa Ndzana's Declaration On The Eve of the G8 meeting

Your forbearers lied to you!
You did not attain this zenith
Of grandeur and opulence
Solely by your sweat and toil.
Or have you forgotten
That we lifted you to the barstool of condescension on which you now
sit?
The golden tarmacs
On which you thread, detached yet gallant
As only you can,
Is overflowing with fleas and maggots.
Your food reeks of my mustiness.
My sweat drops continue to season your meals.
These hands are getting worn from weeding your weeds.
Your forbearers lied to you!
The conceited ground on which you stand was paved
At the expense of natives, soulless heathens and aborigines.
Your forbearers lied to you!
They've abnegated themselves from the heinousness of their crimes.
You've been fed ferry tales wrapped in a stained sack—history.
Time shall unmask the barbaric knights of doom.
Your schemes are a recurring nightmare,
Where screams of drowning babies are muted by the clamor of busy
markets.
Your forbearers lied to you!
We have not always spoken these words,
Danced to these tunes or eaten from these bowls.
We have not always been on our knees,

Voiceless, emasculated, with perforated bowls,
Begging for droplets of your stale wine to drink.
Your forbearers lied to you!

We were never the anarchic, self-destructive, thieving, conniving,
individualistic, and serpentine caricatures of their delusional imaginations;
We weren't noble either,
But we have not always thought these thoughts
Or spoken these words.
We have not always nodded our heads
And tapped our feet to the tune of a broken violin.
We made you emperor in this vast dominion.
But never forget that your forbearers lied to you!

Juju Music

We danced under a hail of confetti, witnesses to an overdue conception. We heard Zimbabwe scream her way out of Rhodesia's putrid womb, Her Majesty's tabooed concubine. We slit the chord, which bound child to mother and mother to child, wiped droplets of melanin and gooey mucus from the baby's bosom with the ruffled flags of frontline states. We were infants and Namibia was still under occupation.

We drank palmwine and ate kola-nuts at Bob Marley's wake. Chant Down Babylon! Chant Down Babylon! Who killed Peter Tosh? The harder we cried, the harder they came, those tears, those salty tears of ours. In fact, we learnt the lyrics to We Are The World as Mandela languished in Jail; Biko's killers ready to strike again. Botha! Ethiopian babies fighting flies, and losing.

We inhaled the debilitating fumes of Amin's scourge. Western Sahara was annexed on our watch. The king's grip is choking us went the lullaby. Mother carried us on her back to catch a glimpse of John Paul II. Walking along Boulevard d'Independence, we heard of Ahidjo's resignation—an altar boy assumes a flea-infested throne. His smile disarmed our fears as he took us on a joyride across the Alps. Self-anointed heroes, orange-headed lizards, blind visionaries, genuine Pan-Africanists, two-headed dogs, Democratic crusaders, tailless snakes...

A priceless lesson: even tyrants die !

We were building bamboo cars when Shagari came to bid us farewell, as unceremoniously as he had come, even quieter than a pin hitting the ground.

Kalakuta Republic ! Requiem for the last Kaiser ! Die Apartheid ! Die ! Reagan and Gorbachev. Thatcher, Perestroika, Garang, Sandanistas, Shimon Peres, East Berlin, Ishmael Reed, The Color Purple, Ghadaffi, Tinnamen Square, Jesse Jackson, Rambo, Commando, Mr. Bond, Diana and Charles, Lake Nyos, Samuel Doe, IRA, Arafat, Coup d'etats, Ayatolla, AIDS. Death is abound !

Savimbi, relentless in his mischief. Moi, still a conniving demagogue cum tribal chief. Mazrui's The Africans. Not yet Uhuru ! Not yet Uhuru !

Biya, Buhari, Eyadema, Doe, Habbrey, Babaginda, Boigny, Diouf, Bongo, Sassou Nguesso, Iran versus Iraq, BBC, Roots, Abu Nidal, Pablo

Escobar, Manu Dibango, Thriller, Madonna, Tutu, Panama, Mujaheedan, cocaine, red and blue, crack, VOA.

We remained Frenchified and Anglisized, ingesting the dust particles of La Troisieme Republique's nuclear ambitions. Where else but in the heart of Africa where men forsake virtue for fortune.

Olympique de Marsielles, Tyson, Maradona, Ben Johnson, Dream Team, Okwaraji, Italia 90, Abedi Pele, George Weah .

What is the IMF? Who owns this World Bank anyways? What happened to Samora's plane ? How can a man jump that high? Jordan ! Those Africans can play with juju! Roger Milla !

We are the seeds of *la crise economie*. We ate the crumbs of *Structural Adjustment Programs*, economic crisis, devaluation, inflation, unemployment, tension, exile, exile, thousands, millions, exiles.

Makossa morphed into a depressing drone ; l'infidelite est en vogue became the chorus. Swallowing communion with beer we hummed quietly to Prince Nico's *Sweet Mother*. Winnie we love you. Winnie we love you. Soyinka ! Pepe Kalle, Ndedi Eyango, Papa Wemba, Lionel Richie, Nkodo Sitony, Khaled, Kassav, Sade, Shabba Ranks and Aurlus Mabele.

Alas, television ! We weren't sedated, we were too hungry, though entertained by dancing men in glossy space suits. Then we heard gunshots coming from Ouagadougou. Long Live Sankara ! Long Live the revolution ! We were denied the excesses of Marcos's orgies and fought for Ghaddafi in Ndjamena. Soukous came blowing from the Congo. Beer, beer, more beer.

Ebony Magazine landed on our front porches. Thriller, Purple Rain, Run DMC, Rhthym Nation 1884, Rakim, Technotronic, Snap, Public Enemy, Eddie Murphy, Cosby, Donna Summer, Boney M., Chaka Demus & Pliers, Tupac and Biggie...

Assaba's Farewell

(One-way ticket to the Canary Islands)

Son,
When you go
To the white man's country
Don't look back
There is nothing here for you
But don't forget
Those of us left behind
Make all the money
There is to make
Work night and day
Read all the books
There is to read
Even if you have to go blind
Son,
Go don't look back!
When you are ripe
For marriage
Let us worry and have the headaches
Your mothers
Will procure
A fine village girl
Son,
A girl that will
Smile when you frown
Laugh when you cry
And feed you like a pig
Son,

My hands are itching
To hold my grandbabies
Son,
If you have to walk...walk
If you have to fly...
Enter that iron bird's belly and fly
If you have to swim...swim
Swim away from the sharks
But swim with the determination
Not to look back
You can't afford to drown
Son,
If we never meet again
So be it
Just go and never come back!

Identity: a study in continuum

My blackness

Hostage-taker

Of aspirations and desires

My blackness

The stage

On which I give a weary and uninspired performance

My blackness

[Inextricably bound to Africa]

Pedestal

On which I so gallantly stand

My blackness

Still a parody

Of my unfinished story...

Dancing *Bikutsi* on The landlady's Porch!

An impasse.

Our footprints are foes with the wind:

Swept in a gush of dust,

Swallowed by a cacophony of events.

We strive.

Some stories remain untold,

Held hostage behind sealed lips,

Scribes depart before completing their scripts.

A dream.

We saw seventy-seven cockroaches, six elves

And a baboon [wearing a yellow tuxedo] dancing Tango on a tyrant's grave.

Nightmare. One dream.

Different dreamers.

Exiles, we've become. Rushdie!

Homeless bodies. Roving soul.

A Familiar Dilemma

Bondage: disloyal acquaintance cum illegitimate sibling of reality.

True:

Truth is a bedmate to demagogues,

A plaything for zealots,

And a tool of blackmail

Utilized by self-anointed seers.

Deceive...

Truth is grease for slippery tongues.

Lies,

Refrain of lethal songs.

I know bondage—ambiguous, abstract, alive and internal.

I know bondage: far from the barbed wires of Auschwitz.

Not the demolishing tanks of Gaza.

Recipe for Empire Building

Blood,
Desecrated altars,
Seers and one prophet,
Twenty hymns and anthems;
Men, brave men,
Gullible men,
Faith—inebriating tonic
Lies! Lies!
Slaves, fighting slaves
Subdued slaves,
Power—toxic aphrodisiac,
Mix visionary minds
With sacrilegious rituals,
Avarice, treachery;
Art and science,
Serve with goodwill.

Rooftop sessions with Mars in sight

(For Jabari Aziz-Ra)

I am bopping my head
And tapping my feet relentlessly
To the melodies of *Jabari's* horn
As Mars hovers eerily above me
A gentle breeze kisses my lips
I know nothing could be more divine,
Yet so simple...
Like contemplating poetic lines
As I stare at the distant city lights
From this comfort zone of mine

**Jabari Aziz-Ra is a pioneer of the Houston performance poetry scene.*

Sax Man (Is he still black?)

His sentences flow sultrily devoid of nouns and pronouns
Improvised notes melt like snowflakes in the humidity of the gulf
It's summer time in the Bayou!
And the one-eyed sax player is having June blues
—A medley of mundane illusions and creative instinct
Assaulting blue-eyed robbers of the avant-garde
He is the personification of jazz
And adheres unapologetically to its innate blackness

Njang...

I am the word that had no beginning
My tempo sent vibrations through galaxies
My first beat was the heart of a dark skinned beauty
I inhabit the hills and valleys
Whether shallow or hollow
I echo
My sound transforms the concept of tomorrow
Because there is no today
I have no recollections of my yesterday
Move to my beat!
I was shipped in chains to Brazil
Mated with the Amazon
Gave birth to Samba
Retraced my roots to Angola
In Swahili
My surname is *ngoma*
White-boys nicknamed me percussion
I have Puerto-Rican in-laws in the Bronx
Made friends with the *Baka*
And triggered hallucinations in silence
In Abakwa they call me njang
Tam-tam!
Congas!
Djembe!
I am the spirit in Reggae
I celebrate mother's day every day
I refuse to play for those with no rhythm
My love has neither reason nor season

Son!

I am a drum machine living in Brooklyn

I gave lessons to Olatunji

Inspired by a braided goddess

I joined the chaotic chorus of the forest

Walking upright

I asked for companionship in my imagination

Man became a manifestation

I showered him with adoration

Procreation!

We built a plethora of nations

I named my first son Fela

I am a drum

I announce the coming of war

Ogun-lawá!

[We are at war]

Listen attentively to the talking drums

Timeless Voodoo

The modest hands of justice repel the unjust
Like an atheist confronted with the prophecies of scriptures
The chorus of a corny song drowns the wails of the oppressed
It is unnatural for a wolf to sooth its bleeding prey
There is a downpour
My roof leaks
Scattered drops of despair soon form a pond
The voodoo priest strikes his gong
I am alone in the woods
Fate brought me to the Texas prairie
A large oak tree stands boldly
Fertilized by the decaying remains of lynch victims
Skeletons of charred corpses hang from its sprawling branches

I was introduced to manhood as a boy
And was denigrated to boyhood as a man
I traded my soul for routine
Dreamt for my boss in my sleep
I'll make repairs before the pond rises to my knee
I wouldn't wait for the devil to deliver me

The voodoo priest strikes his gong
Hip-hop is born
Recycling the collective pains of yesterday—
Pasting them on a contemporary page
The M.C. reigns!
Spray painting ghetto tales on tattered pages
I am lonely in an overcrowded city

The voodoo priest strikes his gong
I begin to speak in tongues
I endure the sensation of burning sulfur
The nigga in me dies!
And even though the prophet lied
There is a faithful crowd at his door waiting in line...
A thin line separating tradition from remorselessness
The confederacy is still alive
Look up at the South Carolina sky
Dead rebels look at James Byrd's tomb from above with broad smiles.

Subliminal Catharsis [my side of the story]

I conjure perplexing miracles...
Mesmerizing the conscious
Like an infant
I make reality seem superstitious
Boredom makes me mischievous
I came in a big 'bang!'
My origins remain mysterious
I've been known to make saints delirious
And even when the cycle seems vicious
I still endure the dark waters,
Which hide the bones of my kin
Amongst the vestiges of stolen treasure
This journey is tedious
But I've survived the tragic winds of history
Sprouting like coconut trees on the edge of the Caribbean Sea
Look at the faces that carry my genes...
My mother planted rice on the Carolina fields
Open you eyes and you'll see marks of her footprints
The pulse of home never skips a beat
I've walked on hot coal with bare feet
Doing back-flips to drumbeats
On the mean Rio de Janeiro streets
I am the personification of beauty and the beast
A Haitian *voodoo* priest with roots in Benin
So, as I try to define the indefinable
I translate seven hundred and seventy seven
Dialects through music
I prophesize from a variety of pulpits

I am possessed by many a spirit
The agony of my legacy is minimal
My existence spans millennia
I am susceptible to dementia
When I attempt to speculate my mysterious origins
As the train of nostalgia speeds through
The synthetic landscapes of a hostile territory
Gunshots could never silence me...
My patience is depleted
And my tolerance for intolerance
Is becoming intolerant
So I close the valves of my heart
To microscopic agents of indoctrination,
Which hide in the gluey clots of my bloodstream
I decline their entry into the sacred gardens of eternity
Intangible me...
Eluding definition
I am a river with no defined direction
I see the gates of heaven during ejaculation
Challenge indoctrination
Heaven is ejaculation
Challenge indoctrination
Heaven is ejaculation
Is there solace in the cold hands of a stolen nation?

Unlikely Origins

The pulsating rhythms
Of a primitive West African drum
Has inspired gospel songs that rock the foundations of street-corner churches
And rattle the roofs of backcountry chapels...
Created the blues,
The musings of two-legged creatures
Swimming in a sea of hopelessness and vice
Regurgitating the desires and fears
Of a tribe that lost its mother tongue...
Writing the unwritten songs
Of the faceless who are treated like mankind's feces
They called jazz a disease
A cosmic concoction with the ability to unleash
Uncontrollable bouts of rebellion and addiction
Incinerating the bridge
Leading to a non-existent Zion
What about rock and roll?
On the other side of the shark infested pool
Saints create recipes for a musical gumbo
Fusing the "Afro" to the "beat"
A tasty bowl of *afrobeat**
Let Miriam Makeba sing
We stand on our tireless feet
Dancing to *makossa* and *soukous*...
Soundtracks to post-independence euphoria
Misguided merry-making
That hides the true face of neocolonial denial

A new band with a new lead singer

Anikulapo on vocals

Dibango French-kissing his horn

A masked schizophrenic on drums

The chorus of a Baptist choir

[Musical] recipes that burn the tongue like fire

Where are the slow jams to spice the making of a thousand nappy-headed messiahs?

The orgasmic feel of freedom

The pulsating beats of a heathen's drum

Enable us to float like leaves

On the surface of this turbulent river

**Fusion of indigenous West African rhythms with Afro-American jazz and funk popularized by the legendary Fela Anikulapo Kuti*

Magic that is you (Anonymous)

Maybe I would look forward to dawn
If I didn't dread facing an angst ridden face
—Wrinkled by allegorical essays of revolt
Stories crippled with uncertainty
And sculpted with intricate precision
Morning time can be hell
Except when I wake up singing the blues
Simple words that put scenes and characters
Idling and moaning on the bleak streets of imaginary cities
With speakers and juke boxes blaring with misery...
An indefinable painting demonizing my wall,
I yawn
[The flesh and bone machine is now on.]
Perhaps even on a day that starts in rain
I would look forward to the morning time
Like jazz heads look forward to an evening with Miles—
If only I had a brown hand rubbing on my thigh
[With the gentile tranquility of a brook]
Then maybe I won't mind the daylight
I forget my own name
And I tread short cuts and unpredictable paths in an unknown place
I stand still
[Sucking all the air there is to breathe]
I am hypnotized
Locked in an Ethiopian shrine meditating
As I listen to the magical notes of Thelonious Monk

Chaos

(For Nina Simone)

Don't tell me it isn't soul,
When we sing the same songs in different tongues
Wiggling our big black butts to the same rhythm from different drums
From flesh to spirit!
We awake sleeping deities
We dance till the moon bows down...
With rhythms so strong
Feelings so raw
We hasten the setting of the sun
And move to the summons of the drum

It is soul music!
Tickling your spine
As you shuffle and jive
It is Funky music!
Turning drizzles into storms
Juju music!
Spirituals that groove to the dictates of beyond
Silence seeks refuge in a cave
Yesterday becomes today
Today tomorrow
And tomorrow yesterday
Eve screams through timelessness
Manifested as Nina
Sprinkling smiles as Mississippi burns
Black music!
Spirit music!

Arousing ecstatic uproar in our collective consciousness
Ignoring space and time
Drunk from a week's old palm wine
Miles Davis blows my mind
And I recite *Q-tip* verses
While (wondering why) *Satchmo* stands with his teeth looking so white
His horn creates delusions of a beautiful world
Hidden in melodic tunes that whisper:
Africa!
Soul!
Passion, spirits, ancestors, the ocean, *fufucorn*
Primitive music, jungle music—
Bursting with laughter, pain, shame and love
From be-bop to hip-hop
Don't you know Negroes sing the sweetest songs?

Gillespie rehearses on the Nuba Mountains
Jazz serenades the sunshine
Peace leaks from the cloudless sky
And folkloric tunes make the moonlight brighter
Their echoes transcend the confines of my mind
It is soul music!
We just sing the same songs in different tongues
It's the same music with different drums

A dying homeland

(For BB, Kwasen Gwangwa'a, Hilarious Ambe and Tabe Samson Awob)

Displacement

Relocation

Weeping forests,

Ghostly two-lanes,

Timber,

Darkness,

Eternal darkness,

Corrupting docks,

Enriching harbors

Mere furniture,

Royal cabinets,

Four unfinished stories...

Countless untold stories...

Money...oh money...

Truth—hidden from daylight.

A rhythm-filled conception

Doun-doun [drums] bring forth the sentiments
Of a forgotten beginning
When nothing became something
Morphing from a void
Into a disjointed maze of dreams
Expressed in a baby's first scream
As she breathes the unfiltered air of vanity
Our humanity...
A muted nothingness
Breeding scions of uncertain nuptials
Hidden in a womb of potential
Guarded from the tainted hands of acculturation
Vine of the divine
Pouring from a hardened nipple
Beneath my toothless chuckle is a dying sage's mumble

Speaking of Collaborators-Traitorus Joe Brutus and co.

(A follow-up to Bate Besong's The Collaborator)

We have heard of vagrants in suits
Spitting lies through sharpened fangs—
Stained with the blood of unwilling martyrs
We watched hustlers in colorful garbs
Lead a colony of intellectual lepers
Your toadyism will condemn you to eternal infamy
Your spirit will be enslaved
Shit-eating flies will be your pallbearers
The ghosts of six students will inhabit your dreams
And deprive you of sleep
You deserve no peace
Your remaining days
Will be spent in an inferno of misery
For you betrayed
The counsel of sages and troubadours
And traded their wisdom for silver coins
Judas will befriend you
And your sons and daughters
Will forever be exiles in hostile lands
They'll bear the cross of your treachery

Speaking of Collaborators pt. 2-Traitorous Joe Brutus and co.

(A follow-up to Bate Besong's *The Collaborator*)

Hero of doom:

You have reduced us

To mere particles of dust

You have denied us passage

To the fountain of hope

You shit on our only road

Posterity will frown on your legacy

Yes, you will have a legacy

Diabolic architect of schemes

Your shamelessness knows no limits

You have bitten-off

A rotten lobe of the juju's kola-nut

You are headed for an eternity

In the chthonic walls of *Kondengui*

Tchollire waits you...

Tragedy awaits you...

Pastor Ngalla's Lengthy Sunday Service

Bare claws,
Digging and mining...mound of *fufucorn*,
Back and forth, mouth to bowl, back and forth,
Bowl to mouth, mouth to bowl, back and forth,
Bowl to mouth. Mouthful, oily molasses,
Masticated bits of *kati-kati*, *jama-jama*, roughage,
Post devotional ritual, Sunday's banquet.
Bellyful. Thirst.
Palm wine: Batibo's Gnostic portion,
Juice for censored clairvoyants...
Sermons, dusty cow horns, and unwashed bowls;
All swallowed by a ball of redness in the distance—dusk, the setting sun.
Belch.
Confession: A promise unfulfilled,
A covenant to live by, a lesson ingested,
Another story

Lightning Strikes The Sinking Glass Tower

The baboons and gorillas
Are licking fetid sores
Dripping with shame.
No green and white flags
To conceal the disgrace
Glaring from their bat-like faces.

The baboons and gorillas
Have finally been evicted from the zoo!
Kicked in their bloodied rear,
They shall take the long route,
Like prodigal step-sons,
To a home they barely know.
Transitory tenants of a sinking glass tower
Where baboons and gorillas strut in muftis and suits.

The baboons and gorillas
Became co-conspirators,
Alongside hyenas and crocodiles,
In devouring the morsels of our stolen pie.
They shall face the wrath
Of an unforgiving conscience,
Perturbing nightmares, ghostly apparitions and paranoia.
These baboons and gorillas: another relic in the vulture's basement.

Bate Besong: Inextinguishable flame...timeless spirit...

Death: a cruel but inevitable transition
Let your blood be libation to the gods
For the sanctification of a benighted nation
Your words are engraved
In the impenetrable caves of eternity
Yours is a timeless echo
That will forever ignite earthquakes in our consciousness

You:

Patron saint of impassive bards

You:

Medium of clarity—agent of restless ancestors

You:

Pristine conscience of a fragile land

You:

Doughty mercenary of primordial origins

You:

Obasijom Warrior—spirit in flesh

You:

Genius!

Timeless two-legged sphinx

Your cameo in this tragicomedy

Of ours is not over!

Yours is an eternal song

BB on the *mic*

Francis Bebey playing Fela's horn

Mongo Beti on drums...the gods are clanging their gongs

You:

Molyko's inextinguishable flame

Singing cantatas with Okigbo

Scribbling post-modernist epistles with U-Tam'si

You:

Immortal louse inhabiting the bushy hair strands

Of accursed demagogues [our leaders]

They'll forever be sleepless

Your words are a terminal virus

In the shit-filled entrails of these humanoid vultures

BB

Lone pearl in a mound of coarse granite

Your sparkle will forever illuminate us

You:

Volcano of a spirit

Voice of protest

Voice of reason

Voice of hope

You:

Son, brother, father, husband, poet

You:

Teacher, playwright, scholar, critic, muse

You:

Artist, rebel, writer, mentor, friend...

Mind over matter...spirit over flesh...mind over matter...BB lives
forever

You:

Inextinguishable flame...timeless spirit

Androgynous beauty of the tropical grass-fields: You emit subtle whiffs of wet eucalyptus leaves that titillate the palates of sweet-toothed charlatans. You are the defaced cradle of betrayed ancestors and abandoned tomb of disinherited monarchs.

Your strength and valor has transformed you from the quaint colony of a jittery Kaiser to a Grande fort of resistance.

Your undulating bosom bears the vestiges of primordial dramas that now assume the forms of hills and the personalities of lakes.

Your outstretched hands have morphed into altars through which we quench the thirst of our departed. The ancestors must be drunk from too much libation. Time has always been and remains a restless and unpredictable ally in your quest to make sense of who and what you are.

You exhibit a calm that is both majestic and sinister. Distance can etch an ineffaceable dent on the chord that binds too lovers. And in its unintended fury can efface familiar faces from the canvas of memory. Who can ever boast of forgetting those unnamed pathways that run like stretch marks on your reddish brown skin? You are the object of *Kotto Bass's* ode—he serenades the heavens with your tales woven in song.

What kind of song will be befitting for one that straddles between the absolutism of patriarchy and matriarchal sensibilities? Could it be a ballad, a conservative dose of sentimentality immersed in a simple melody; accessible and sweet yet engaging enough to catch the ear of a peddler doing his rounds on *Commercial Avenue*? Would one be compelled to call on *Ngumba* to change the dance from *njang* to a waltz?

Could it be a protest song? One of those chant-down-Babylon rants that would shatter the walls surrounding the mansions of hustlers disguised as messiahs. No!

Abakwa: nucleus of my being, rusted-roofed chateau of my dreams, bearer of my first footprint, storied hub for hotheads, *Tikariland*; these days of folly will come to pass.

You were the threading ground on which misguided political novices fertilized the grounds for tyranny to flourish. Your vengeance would be cold and timely. Your honor would be restored when the crust breaks from your eyes. Time will honor its word. Your unforgiving biro

will scribble their heinous legacies with the boldest prints on the indelible pages of history.

My romance with you began during childhood. It seemed as if the creator's divine touch carved this vast space to suit your colorful and restless personality. The sight of a waterfall-gushing hill overlooking a sprawling valley of well-manicured bungalows bordered by slums was fascinating to an impressionable mind.

Bambili...one chance

Ndop...Ndop...

Douala...moto don flop

Yaounde...one chance

If you no run

Motor go flop

Went the chorus to the riotous song—a funky medley of car honks and *soukous* blaring speakers. Only you could sing that kind of song. Only you!

Langston Hughes, anointed versifier of post-depression Black American plight must have been referring to someone in your liking when he lamented of dreams deferred.

You are a dream deferred. You are a phoenix still waiting its meteoric rise. You've been left for dead. Your genius suppressed and left to rot, for your growth deferred to an unmarked date in a calendar that isn't yours.

History can be a prankster. You were an enslaver's treasure-trove. Your birth may have been premature and your features engineered by Bismark's errand boys, but you were still able to sculpt an identity from the granular sediments of dynamited igneous rocks.

Then a deceptive wind of change blew your way and your music was put on pause. Freedom needs no manifesto, but there you were, arms opened in embrace to hug a familiar friend with an unfamiliar name. When your messiah is born, will you recognize its face?

The voice of freedom and democracy—revered trophies of an apathetic bourgeoisie, echoed their alluring sounds through out your domain. From the pot-holed filled slums of *Sisia Quarters* to the quasi-security of gated bungalows in *Foncha Street*.

I saw you march through the thatched stalls of *Ntarikon Motorpark*. You shared a pot of *kati-kati* with the *Takumbeng*. They say you make the tastiest *koki*. Feed the children! For if only they knew the power they possessed...if only they knew. The man on the '33' *Export* poster would lose his smile.

You marched through *Metta Quarters*, blinded by courage and guided by justice; you made a left on *T-junction*. The music changed its mood as you approached those idle fools in berets and boots looking as if they'd just been released from the zoo.

And you began dancing. You danced like only you can dance. You danced more than you ever danced for *Lapiro de Mbanga*.

Your person, a bundle of mystique hemmed in a frame of steel. I saw you sniff tear gas. It cured your catarrh. I saw you *chong* and *kefa* to the sounds of grenades and bullets. Six bullets through your heart and you still didn't die. Instead you danced. I saw you tear through the smoke and dance like you knew no tomorrow. You danced to their marching boots. Their hearts blackened with sooth. When they kicked, you leapt. When they whipped, you crept. When they yelled, you jeered. When they shot, you fought. When they stole, you burnt. Bamenda chop fire!

Abakwa: you incarnate the most sublime of songs. Your lyrics have not yet drowned in the manmade lake of palm-wine, your backyard. You have been reduced to singing under your breath like a pious nun. Your rising sun will soon unmask the violators of your trust. They'll wish they hadn't changed the tune of your song.

“Fragmented Melodies is a seminal, introspective work of exceptional freshness and contemplative diction transmitted in an enriched style that immediately grasps the reader’s attention...From Ethiopia to Brazil, Kigali to Bamenda, from the smoked-stained vocal cords in Soweto to the clanging steel doors of the Kondengui maximum security prison in Yaoundé, Wakai’s poetic voices resonate the sound of traditional drums, the cacophony of jazz, the isolated acoustic notes of guitar strings, and the suffocating stench of the dictator’s funeral pyre. The diverse voices in the poems are unified into a single poetic journey of desolation, hope, idealism, lamentation, exile, and freedom.” - Babila Mutia, Professor of Literature, ENS, University of Yaounde 1, Cameroon

*“Kangsen Wakai’s poetic landscape in *Fragmented Melodies* encompasses all that is human as well as all that defies humanity. The poems cascade from the passionate songs of his heart, through defiant rhythms of resistance to songs in distant lands ‘beyond our desecrated shores’ but in the end Wakai’s poetic compass is homebound to ... amongst common places and common people who affirm the human zeal for music of truth and peace. Yet, it is Wakai’s imagistic canvass which confirms the birth of a compelling poetic voice in this season of waiting...” - Joyce Ashuntantang, Department of English, University of Connecticut, USA*

“With poems like these that are crafted to sound like music to the ears, no reader can afford to leave the dance floor. This is indeed the trademark of a new writing that has come to stay.” - Mwalimu George Ngwane, writer and Chairman of National Book Development Council, Cameroon

“...a leading voice in the ongoing renaissance of Anglophone Cameroon literature in the Diaspora.” - Dibussi Tande, USA based Journalist and Poet

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